

McCone's Confirmation

John A. McCone's confirmation as new director of Central Intelligence kicked up more than the usual cloud of senatorial dust, and in the dust flew a few stinging grits. None of the 12 senators, Democratic and Republican, who fought his confirmation showed substantial cause, however, why he could not fill Allen Dulles' abandoned gumshoes. Sen. Margaret Chase Smith observed that McCone had no experience in intelligence. But that standard would have eliminated a number of agency heads for whom Senator Smith has readily voted.

The picture of the new C. I. A. chief which emerges from the hearings is not very attractive. In 1956 he seems to have set out (without success) to hunt the heads of 10 Cal Tech professors who backed Adlai Stevenson's position on nuclear tests—a position later adopted by the Eisenhower Administration, although one of its more innocent higher-ups had called it "catastrophic nonsense."

Certainly, Mr. McCone is not a dispassionate man, nor does he strike one as the sort of man who easily suffers the views of those he considers less wise than he. This is not a positive disadvantage; yet passionate objectivity is hardly a stumbling block to sleuths (Sherlock Holmes was so bored by theory that he once told Dr. Watson the theory that the earth revolves around the sun was of

no interest to him one way or the other.)

Hearings on Mr. McCone were given, strangely enough, to the Armed Services Committee of the Senate rather than to the more hostile Foreign Relations Committee, whose Senator Morse was vitally interested in the McCone case. Morse was shunted off to the Punta del Este conference while the hearings went on; and in what Doris Fleenor calls "an unusual display of senatorial discourtesy," the Senate refused to put off the McCone vote until he returned. It was established during the hearings that Mr. McCone holds some \$1,000,000 in Standard Oil Co. stock, and Standard Oil is one of four holders for American-Arabian Oil Co., with heavy stakes in the Middle East. Senator Clark of Pennsylvania suggested that since Middle East oil is of long-standing concern to American intelligence, McCone would be well advised to divest himself of his Standard Oil stock—certainly not a bad idea.

If the McCone hearings had come a few months back—say in the wake of the Cuban fiasco—they might have stirred public as well as senatorial dust. But the country seems to accept Mr. McCone with a yawn. He is a schooled administrator, and C. I. A. is not, after all, the most important agency in the government.